

ROBIN WILLIAMS

He was their inspiration. He made their lives extraordinary.

# DEAD POETS SOCIETY

A PETER WEIR FILM



TOUCHSTONE PICTURES Presents In Association With SILVER SCREEN PARTNERS IV A STEVEN HAFT Production  
In Association With WITT-THOMAS PRODUCTIONS A PETER WEIR Film ROBIN WILLIAMS "DEAD POETS SOCIETY"  
Music By MAURICE JARRE Director of Photography JOHN SEALE, A.C.S. Written By TOM SCHULMAN  
Produced By STEVEN HAFT PAUL JUNGER WITT TONY THOMAS Directed By PETER WEIR

MPA PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED

CCO COUNCIL ON CRIME

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## Discussion Group Packet



## **Film Discussion Guidelines**

Next week you will be leading the class in a discussion of the film you just saw. In other words, you will be teaching the class. That's kind of scary at first, but most of the students who have done it really seemed to enjoy it and got a lot out of it. Most of the groups have done some very good things. Here are some guidelines to help you make your class successful:

- Plan enough activities to teach the entire class period. In reality I will need about 5-10 minutes at the end of class to talk about the next film, etc., but it is better for you to have too many activities than not enough.
- The most important thing about class discussion is to involve the class as much as possible. Some ways to do this:
  - Break the class up into small discussion groups of about 5 students to talk about questions you ask.
  - Write the questions you want students to discuss on the board and make sure they know what you want them to do.
  - When students are discussing among themselves all the members of your group should scatter around the room listening in on discussions to help students as necessary and to make sure that they are speaking English.
  - If students aren't responding to your questions it's OK to call on them anyway.
  - It's OK to use Chinese names when calling on students.
  - Have students stand when they talk. This makes it easier to hear them in the back of the room.
- Giving background information on the movie is OK but please don't use information from the textbook; students can read this for themselves. The internet is a great source of new information. Please limit background information and plot summaries to about 5 or 10 minutes.

## Activities for Film Discussions

You can use any or none of these ideas; it's up to you:

1. Write some discussion questions on the board and divide the class into groups to talk about them. You can use some of the questions in this packet and/or questions on the homework assignments. (The post-viewing homework is especially good for finding discussion questions.) Better yet, make up some questions of your own.

One good way of dividing the class in to discussion groups is to have them count off from 1 to 5 (or whatever). All the 1s go to the first group, the 2s to the second, etc.

2. Move groups up to sit in the front of the class instead of at their tables.
3. Game: this game is a variation on Count-7. Before class your group writes questions about the movie on strips of paper and puts them into a container. During class have students count off starting with 1. When a student gets any number with 7 (7, 17, 27, etc.) or a multiple of 7 (14, 21, 28, etc.) in it, they must say "pass." If they say the number, they must come to the front and draw a question from the container and either answer it or call on someone from the class to answer it.
4. Game: Stump the Experts. Divide the class into two teams. Each team selects two members as experts to stand in front of the class. The moderator (one of your group) calls on volunteers to ask an expert from the other team a question. If the expert gets the answer:
  - right, their team gets a point.
  - wrong, the person who asked the question must answer the question correctly. If the person who asked the question gets the answer:
    - right, they go up front and become an expert

- wrong, their team loses two points and they don't become an expert.
5. Write up a summary of the movie plot and then print a copy for each group. Cut the copies into strips, one paragraph or sentence on each strip. Mix up the strips and give them to the groups. The groups have to put the strips in the right order.
  6. Have students imagine what happened to the characters 5-10 years after the movie was over.
  7. Have students write their own questions about the movie then ask them to the class.
  8. For the last activity, ask every student in the class to rate the film in stars, 5 stars being great, 4 good, etc. and tell why they think so. Tally the number of stars on the board using English-type tally marks (ⅢⅢⅢⅢ).

# **Dead Poet's Society**

## **Some Possible Questions for ESL Class Discussion**

**from [www.eslnotes.com](http://www.eslnotes.com)**

1. Was Welton the type of school you would want to attend? Why or why not?
2. What was good about the school? What was bad?
3. Do schools like Welton exist in your country?
4. If you were attending Welton, and Mr. Keating was your poetry teacher, how would you describe him to your parents?
5. Why did the students decide to create a Dead Poet's Society?
6. Why was Neil's father so upset when Neil decided to try and be an actor?
7. Why did Mr. Nolan and the school administration force the boys to sign the paper blaming Mr. Keating for Neil's death?
8. Was Mr. Keating an admirable person? Was Mr. Nolan? Neil? Neil's father?
9. The title of the chapter in the textbook is "Marrow of Life", after the quote from Thoreau: "I wanted to live deep and suck all the marrow of life." What is the meaning of this phrase?
10. *Carpe Diem!* Seize the Day! What does this phrase mean?
11. Explain these lines from *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost  
...  
Two roads diverged in a wood, And I –  
I took the one less traveled by  
And that has made all the difference.

*From Questions to Ponder about Dead Poet's Society*

(<http://www10.pair.com/~crazydv/weir/dps/questions.html>)

1. Would Neil still have eventually committed suicide if Mr. Keating had never come into his life?
2. Why exactly did Neil take his own life?
3. Could Neil have found another way out of his predicament? Was suicide his only answer?
4. With similarly screwed up parents as Neil's, why didn't Todd take the same way out?
5. Who was really the bravest of Keating's boys?
6. What happened to the original Dead Poets Society? Why did it cease to exist?
7. How did the poetry book make it into Neil's room? Did Keating put it there? And if so, why, after telling the boys that the present administration would not look favorably on it, would Keating do that?
8. In the initial screenplay, Todd specifically does not sign the paper at the end. In the movie, we are not told one way or the other. Did Todd sign it or not?
9. *The Next Day*... What happens next? What does the future hold for Keating and the boys?
10. Who really was to blame for Neil's death?

*Questions from student Guo Rui (Blue) junior Business English class 7, 2006-7:*

1. If you knew that this school was strict but successful in getting students into top colleges, would you go there if you had the opportunity?
2. Which role do you like best? Why?
3. If you were a student at Welton, would you take part in the Dead Poet's Society?
4. Can you understand Neil's father? If you were Neil, what would you do?
5. What is the most attractive part of Mr. Keating's personality?
6. How did the poetry book make it into Neil's desk?

# Miscellaneous links for Dead Poets Society ([1989](#))

from the Internet Movie Database  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0097165/miscsites>

1. [Dead Poets Society](#)
2. [DVDwolf](#)
3. [Carpe Diem, A Dead Poets Society Page](#)
4. [Movie-2-DVD](#)
5. [The Robin Williams Fansite - info](#)
6. [Rwf Filmscores](#)
7. [Directory site with information and multimedia content.](#)
8. <http://www.antiromantic.com/dps/index.asp>
9. <http://www.peterweircave.com/articles/articlec.html>